

894

EXCURSION NEWS SHEET

ing : June 7 Mr Rohan Bugg: The Kimberley
ing : July 5 Members' Night: Wildlife in Backyard
ursion : June 9 Wombat Forest: Mr David Endacott
ursion : July 7 Fungi at Nerrina: Florence Chuk
(Half - day, commencing at 1.30 pm)



President: Mr G Binns Ph:
Secretary: Mr L Fink
Treasurer: Ms S Davison
Editor: Mr A Dyson

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PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350.

Meetings are held at the Art Building, School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard St South, commencing at 7.30 pm.

Excursions commence from the corner of Sturt and Armstrong Sts., Ballarat, at 9.30 am for full-day excursions or at 1.30 pm for half-day excursions.

Field Reports

Margaret Rotheram - 3 Brolgas and 3 Cape Barren Geese near Cressy. There had been recent reports of a flock of Cape Barren Geese at Lake Corangamite which could explain this sighting.

Stephanie Davison - 30 to 40 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos over the suburbs.

Helen Burgess - a koala in Moolap Street stayed for 2 days.

Maureen Christie - a Grey Butcherbird at her home (which killed her canary). Maureen also commented on the presence of fungi under trees at Victoria Park. From the description members presumed it to be the Fly Agaric (Ken McDonnell noted it as being common in the Wombat Forest) Carol Hall had also seen what members thought would be Fly Agaric under pine trees at Blampied. These specimens were browner and flatter than usual.

Tony Dyson - a Copperhead snake seen almost daily in the same resting place at home at Durham Lead. Other members commented that April was often an active time for snakes.

John Stayt - an intriguing report a small glowing patch of light on the beach at night. John likened it to glowworms - local experts told him it was probably the presence of krill. John had also seen 2 Galahs attacking a Nankeen Kestrel over a golf course - the attackers eventually withdrew.

John Gregurke - during Easter at Enfield noticed Greenhood Orchids in abundance. Also the Bearded Midge Orchids.

Pat Murphy - had also been to Enfield and noticed a small patch of *Pterostylis* sp. Aff. *Parviflora* (Red Tips) and a first sighting for the Ballarat area of *Prasophyllum Archeri*.



Claire Dalman - a group of about 14 Cattle Egrets on Lake Wendouree.

Elizabeth Stayt - asked for described trees in Victoria Park to be identified. Lyndsay Fink advised they are Cork Oaks. (Members agreed a club visit to Victoria Park would be a good idea)

Wildlife in the Backyard

This is the topic for our July meeting. Please give some thought to what you can "show and tell" us about your backyard.

DIARY DATES

Thursday 27 June 7.30 pm Committee Meeting at
(Florence Williamson)



Warrambeen Demonstration Farm & Landcare Centre

Sunday May 5

Halfway between Rokewood and Shelford lies the 10,000 acre property of Warrambeen, specialising in fine merino wool (16 - 20 micron) and also carrying around 500 head of Hereford/Angus cattle. It is owned by Trish and Ian Taylor and has been in Trish's family since 1900.

Warrambee Creek flows south through the property, eventually joining the Barwon River. Thanks to conservative farming practices in the past, not all the native grassland has vanished and efforts are being made to conserve species such as poa, kangaroo grass, blue devil, lobelia and tree violet typical of these basalt plains. Bluestone quarried on site provided the materials for a magnificent shearing shed (1840's) still in use, shearers' quarters (now the Landcare Education Centre) and the homestead which has undergone considerable modification over the years.

Alcoa and Greening Australia together support the Centre which aims to increase awareness of landcare and the importance of sustainable land-use while at the same time appreciating the native grassland communities and fauna. Displays and resource material deal with pest control, salinity, farm planning, fine wool production and management strategies for native grasslands and wetlands.

Our first stop was at Bingley Swamp at the eastern end of the property. A natural wetland fed by a tributary of the Yarrowee, its height has been artificially raised in order to farm eels which are processed at Skipton. One tonne of young eels will grow into a 6 tonne harvest ! We saw shelduck, black duck, grey teal and a pair of brown falcons.

On arrival at the Centre Ian took us to one of the paddocks where native grasses are retained - here tests on a fungus designed to eradicate crickets have been carried out; the ground was so dry that the resulting cracks were home to huge numbers of these insects - and a dunnart, seen briefly before it scurried down a crack faster than Ian could dig it out. So far this year only 4"(100mm) of rain has fallen. Average annual rainfall for this area is 550mm (cf Ballarat 750mm). Warrambeen is 250 m lower in altitude than Ballarat.

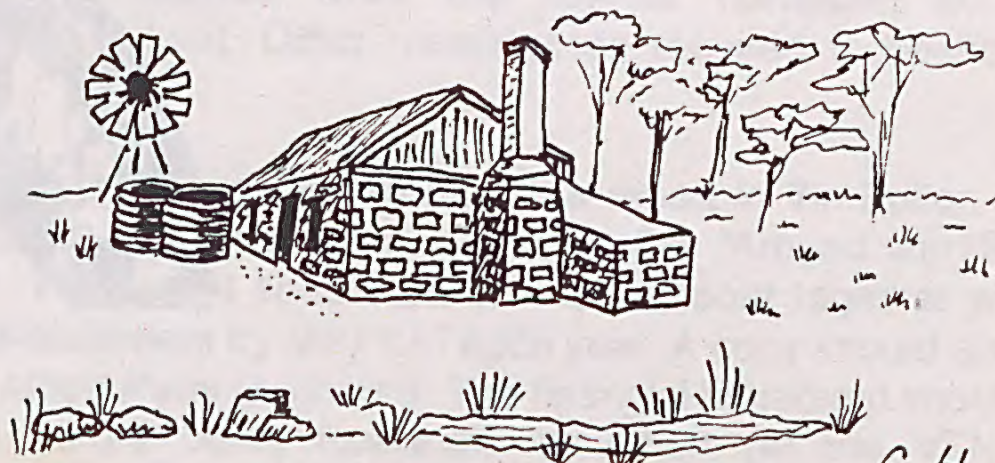
Warrambine Creek's salinity and discharge are monitored at an automatic recording station, the data being downloaded monthly by the Rural Water Commission. At other sites we saw groundwater test bores. Salinity varies from 12,000 ppm to 500ppm, often within distances of only tens of metres.

On the dam near the homestead white and straw-necked ibis were seen in the company of yellow-billed spoonbills, egrets and a pair of white-faced herons. Red-rumped parrots perched on overhead wires.

While long shelterbelts of sugar gums had been planted in the past, the present owners were establishing plantations of eucalypts, wattles and she-oaks, and direct seeding had been used along the paddock perimeters. Although the original plains would not have had so many trees, as an example of sustainable land-use this makes sense and will help to combat erosion and salinity caused by European farming practices.

A lunch break in the Centre gave us an opportunity to inspect the displays and resource materials, which are still being developed, and to view a short introductory video. Although this building had a new iron roof, the original shingles were preserved underneath. Groups making use of the Centre included schools and agricultural organisations; some simply used it as a rural retreat for conferences.

A final stop at Lake Gumley near the head of Warrambine Creek at the northern end of the property yielded an eastern swamp-hen, coots, black duck, and a Little grebe; a restless flycatcher caught our attention with its scissor-grinding call, and a flock of white-winged choughs flew off from the roadside. This artificial pondage supplies the homestead, which is 5 km away and 50m lower, by pipeline.



BILL YOUNG-HARVEY

Bill, a club member over a number of years and an enthusiastic bird observer died at Easter. The club extends deep sympathy to Helen, his loved wife, friend and birding companion. We will miss his gentle, cheerful presence.

Miss Zoe Banfield of the Ararat Field Naturalists Club has also died recently at the age of 93. She and her sister Lorna were good friends to the club on visits to the Ararat district in years past.

Interstate the deaths occurred of two men of international stature in the conservation movement. Milo Dunphy who, like his father Myles before him, was a leading advocate for National Parks and wilderness in the eastern states, died in Sydney. In Tasmania, Peter Dombrovskis, the renowned wilderness photographer, died on a photographic expedition to the Western Arthurs. His superb photographs captured the unique beauty of isolated regions of Tasmanian wilderness and helped to achieve world recognition for its heritage values. He was aged 51.

Brigadier General Hugh Officer, an esteemed Melbourne ornithologist, environmentalist and philanthropist, was another Easter departure. He was a life member of BOC since 1975, wrote books on honeyeaters and flycatchers, which became collectors' items, and personally established a nature reserve at Olinda.

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RULES AND REGULATIONS OF VFNCVA

AIMS

- (a) To improve communication and co-operation between clubs.
- (b) To encourage establishment of new clubs.
- (c) To foster state-wide activities.
- (d) To support and promote conservation issues.
- (e) To provide information on natural history.

GUIDELINES

1 An affiliated club of the VFNCA must be a financial member of the Association. This is best done at the Annual Campout in March when subs are due.

2 The Executive Committee of the Association will be elected at the AGM in March each year.

Tenure of Committee Members to be three years, with two standing every year. ... advantageous and desirable to have delegates as widely representative as possible.

The present interim Committee selected in March 1996 at Portsea was - Jane Cleary (Bendigo), Ruth Graney (Portland), Albert Perry (Creswick), Wendy Savage (Latrobe Valley), and Noel Schleiger (FNCV). Geoff Travers (Ringwood) (Executive Officer), and Dick Southcombe (Geelong) to be consultant.

The funds of VFNCA will be held by the Committee. Each year a suitable sum is to be advanced to the organising club for the ensuing Annual Campout

Regularity of Meetings. A Committee meeting should be held within three months after the Annual Campout, so that momentum is kept. Other meetings as required to be held in Spring.

The host club is expected to furnish a report to the Editor, Field Nats News, to participating clubs via the "Around the State" column. This report should be on the campout together with a financial statement by May 1 of each year. A copy should also be sent to Albert Perry (Archivist). The financial statement should be audited before being forwarded to Albert (at the VFNCA's expense).

RESPONSIBILITY AND JURISDICTION OF THE COMMITTEE

Committee is responsible for administration of the VFNCA.

The campout will be organised by the host club.

The Committee should lobby for offers at the AGM from clubs to host the next campout at, for example, Anglesea, Westernport, Bright, Grampians, Mt Hotham, Inverloch, Bairnsdale, etc.

FNCB MEMBERS COMMENTS

Members are invited to comment on the above proposals. Two current comments are: (1) It is assumed that the Executive Committee has a total of 6 members and (2) The proposed tenure of 3 years is regarded as being an excessive committment.

AUSTRALIAN FUNGI MAPPING SCHEME (Project of the FNCV, the National Herbarium of Victoria and Deakin University)

The FNCV Fungi kit is available to members - it is held in our library cupboard.

A pilot scheme is underway to survey the distribution of eight fungi species. Knowledge of Australian fungi lags a century behind that of flowering plants and the pilot study attempts to remedy this. Fungi hunters are wanted and the material to study is available in the kit. The kit includes advice on collecting and identifying fungi, leaflets on poisonous fungi, labels for collections and copies of the *Fungimap Newsletter*.